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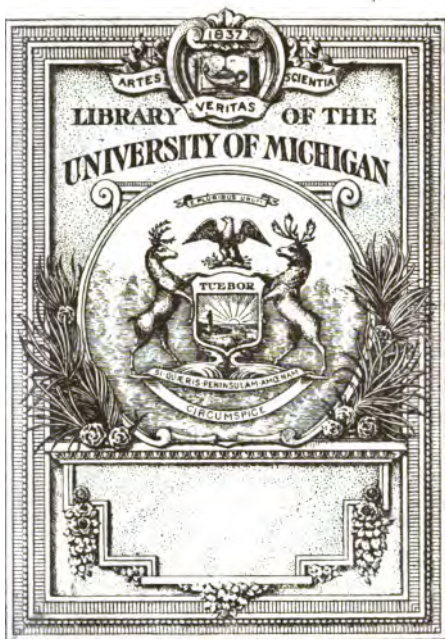
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BY RICHARD HENRY STODDARD.

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WASHINGTON IRVING.

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RICHARD HENRY STODDARD.

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LIFE OF

WASHINGTON IRVING.

THE life of Washington Irving was one of the brightest ever led by an author. He discovered his genius at an early age; was graciously welcomed by his countrymen; answered the literary condition of the period when he appeared; won easily, and as easily kept, a distinguished place in the republic of letters; was generously rewarded for his work; charmed his contemporaries by his amiability and modesty; lived long, wisely, happily, and died at a ripe old age, in the fullness of his powers and his fame. He never learned the mournful truth which the lives of so many authors force upon us:

Slow rises worth, by poverty depressed ;”

he never felt the ills which so often assail the souls of scholars :

“ Toil, envy, want, the patron and the jail ;”

he never wrote for his bread like Johnson and Goldsmith, and never hungered like Otway and Chatterton ; but lived in learned ease, surrounded

by friends, master of himself and his time—a prosperous gentleman. Born under a lucky star, all good things sought him out, and were turned by him to delightful uses. He made the world happier by his gifts, and the world honors his memory.

The ancestry of Washington Irving reaches back to the days of Robert Bruce, who, when a fugitive from the court of Edward I., concealed himself in the house of William De Irwin, his secretary and sword-bearer. William De Irwin followed the changing fortunes of his royal master; was with him when he was routed at Methven; shared his subsequent dangers; and was one of the seven who were hidden with him in a copse of holly when his pursuers passed by. When Bruce came to his own again he made him Master of the Rolls, and ten years after the battle of Bannockburn, gave him in free barony the forest of Drum, near Aberdeen. He also permitted him to use his private badge of three holly leaves, with the motto, *Sub sole sub umbra virens*, which are still the arms of the Irving family. Our concern, however, is not with the ancestors of Irving, but with his father, William Irving, who was from Shapinsha, one of the Orkney Islands, and who, on the death of his mother, determined to follow the sea. He was born in 1731, a year before Washington, and when his biographers find him, was a petty officer on board of an armed packet-ship in the service of his British

Majesty, plying between Falmouth and New York. At the former port he met and became enamored of Sarah Sanders, a beautiful girl about two years younger than himself, the only daughter of John and Anna Sanders, and granddaughter of an English curate named Kent. They were married at Falmouth, on the 18th of May, 1761, and two years and two months later embarked for New York, leaving the body of their first child in an English grave-yard. William Irving now abandoned the sea, and entering into trade, was prospering in a small way when the Revolution broke out. His house was under the guns of the English ships of war in the harbor, so he concluded to remove to the country, and took refuge with his family in Rahway, New Jersey. He was safer, perhaps, than he would have been in New York; but business was at an end. He was pointed out as a rebel, and British troops were billeted in his best rooms, while the family was banished to the garret, so he made up his mind to return to New York. He was still a rebel, as well as his wife, who supplied prisoners with food from her own table, visited them in prison when they were ill, and furnished them with clothes, blankets, and the like. "I'd rather you'd send them a rope, Mrs. Irving," said the brutal Cunningham, who, nevertheless, allowed her charities to pass through his hands.

Washington Irving, the youngest of eleven children, and the eighth son of William and



Sarah Irving, was born toward the close of these troublous times in New York, on April 3d, 1783. The house in which he was born, a plain, two-story dwelling in William Street (131), between Fulton and John, has long since disappeared, as well as the house on the opposite side of the same street (128) to which the family moved within a year after his birth. If the boy differed in any respect from the average boy, the particulars have not reached us. The earliest recorded anecdote in which he figures connects him with the illustrious name of Washington, who entered the city with his army not many months after his birth. The enthusiasm which greeted the great man was showed by a young Scotch maid-servant of the family, who followed him one morning into a shop, and showing him the lad, said: "Please, your honor, here's a bairn was named after you." He placed his hand on the head of his little namesake and blessed him.

Master Irving was not a prodigy; for at the first school, kept by a woman, to which he was sent in his fourth year, and where he remained upwards of two years, he learned little beyond his alphabet; and at the second, where boys and girls were taught, and where he remained until he was fourteen, he was more noted for his truth-telling than for his scholarship. He distinguished himself while at school by playing the part of Juba in Addison's Cato, at a public exhibition, and by amusing the audience by

struggling at the same time with a mass of honey-cake which he was munching behind the scenes, when he was suddenly summoned upon the stage. The first book he is known to have read with pleasure was Hoole's translation of "Orlando Furioso," which fired him to emulate the feats of its heroes, by combatting his play-mates with a wooden sword in the yard of his father's house. His next literary favorites were "Robinson Crusoe" and "Sinbad the Sailor," and a collection of voyages and travels, entitled "The World Displayed," which he used to read at night by the glimmer of secreted candles after he had retired to bed, and which begot in him a desire to go to sea—a strong desire that by the time he left school almost ripened into a determination to run away from home and be a sailor. It led him, at any rate, to try to eat salt pork, which he abominated, and to lie on the hard floor, which, of course, was distasteful to him. These preliminary hardships proved too much for his heroism, so the notion of becoming a gallant tar was reluctantly abandoned.

Irving's first known attempt at original composition was a couplet levelled against a larger school-fellow, who was attentive to the servant-girl of his master, and who was so enraged at the fun it occasioned, that he gave the writer a severe threshing. The young poet was discouraged in his personalities, but not his art; for he contributed metrical effusions to the *Weekly Museum*, a

little periodical of four pages, published in Peck Slip, to which he also contributed moral essays.

✓ At the age of thirteen he wrote a play, which was represented at the house of a friend, and stimulated his boyish fondness for the stage. He was abetted in his dramatic passion by James K. Paulding, who was between four and five years his senior, and was residing with his brother William Irving, who had married his sister. The theater was situated in John Street, between Broadway and Nassau, not far from his father's house, from which he used to steal to see the play, returning in time for the evening prayer, after which he would pretend to retire for the night to his own room in the second story, whence he would climb out of the window on a woodshed, and so get back to the theater, and the enjoyment of the after-piece. These youthful escapades, if detected, would no doubt have subjected him to a severe lecture from his father, who was a strict, God-fearing man, and to tender reproaches from his mother. "Oh, Washington!" sighed the old lady, "if you were only good!"

(After a year or two more of school-life, during which he acquired the rudiments of a classical education, he concluded to study law, a profession to which his brother John had devoted himself, and accordingly entered the office of Henry Masterton, with whom he remained until the summer of 1801, when he transferred his services to Brockholst Livingston, and, on that gentle-

man being called to the bench of the Supreme Court of the State in the following January, he continued his legal pursuits in the office of Josiah Ogden Hoffman. Why Irving conceived that he had the makings of a lawyer in him, we are not told; nor why his father, who was averse to law, should have permitted him to mistake his talents. It was not a very dangerous mistake, however, for he soon awoke from it; nor was it sedulously indulged in while it lasted; for when not employed, like Cowper before him, in giggling and making giggle, he passed his days in reading the belle-lettre literature of England, and such literature as America then possessed, which was not much, nor worth dwelling upon now. He found his vocation in his nineteenth year, in the beginning of December, 1802, or it was found for him, by his brother Peter, who, a couple of months before, had started a daily paper in New York, under the title of the *Morning Chronicle*, of which he was the editor and proprietor, and in which he persuaded his clever young brother to assist him. He furnished a series of essays over the signature of "Jonathan Oldstyle," which betrayed the bent of his mind and his early reading, and which were generally of a humorous character. They were so much superior to the newspaper writings of the period that they attracted great attention, and in spite of their local and temporary interest, were copied into the journals of other cities. Among those who were

struck by their talent was Charles Brockden Brown, who was the first American that made literature a profession, and who had already published four or five novels, remarkable both for their extravagance and their power. He was a contributor to the periodicals of the day—such as they were—of which the best, perhaps, was *The Monthly Magazine and American Register*, of which he was the proprietor. It soon died, and was followed by *The Literary Magazine and American Register*, of which he was also the proprietor, and it was in this latter capacity, rather than as the first American author, that he visited Irving, and besought him to aid him in his new enterprise. He was not successful, for, whatever may have been his inclinations, "Mr. Jonathan Oldstyle" had not yet decided upon being an author.

Irving's love of adventure, which had been stimulated by the reading of voyages and travels, and which would have led him to follow a maritime life, if he could have gratified his inclinations, expended itself in long rambles about the rural neighborhoods of the city, which he knew by heart, and in more distant excursions into the country. He spent a holiday in Westchester County in his fifteenth year, and explored the recesses of Sleepy Hollow; and, in his seventeenth year, made a voyage up the Hudson, the beauties of which, as Bryant has pointed out, he was the first to describe. He was greatly im-

pressed by the sight of the Highlands, crowned with forests, with eagles sailing and screaming around them, and unseen streams dashing down their precipices; and was fairly bewitched by the Kaatskill Mountains. "Never shall I forget," he wrote, "the effect upon me of the first view of them predominating over a wide extent of country, part wild, woody, and rugged, part softened away into all the graces of cultivation. As we slowly floated along, I lay on the deck and watched them through a long summer's day; undergoing a thousand mutations under the magical effects of atmosphere; sometimes seeming to approach, at other times to recede; now almost melting into hazy distance, now burnished by the setting sun, until, in the evening, they printed themselves against the glowing sky in the deep purple of an Italian landscape." ~~In his twentieth year he made a visit to Johnstown, the residence of his eldest sister, which he reached in a wagon, after a voyage by sloop to Albany.~~ This visit seems to have been undertaken on account of his health, for he was troubled with a constant pain in his breast, and a harassing cough at night. "I have been unwell almost all the time I have been up here," he wrote to a friend. "I am too weak to take any exercise, and too low-spirited half the time to enjoy company." "Was that young Irving," asked Judge Kent of his brother-in-law, "who slept in the room next to me, and kept up such an incessant cough during the night?"

"It was." "He is not long for this world." This lugubrious judgment of the great jurist was shared by the family of Irving, who determined to send him to Europe. The expense was mainly borne by his brother William, who told him, speaking in behalf of his relatives, that one of their greatest sources of happiness was that fortune put it in their power to add to the comfort and happiness of one so dear to them. They accordingly secured a passage for him to Bordeaux, for which he started on the 19th of May, 1804. "There's a chap," said the captain, "who will go overboard before we get across."

The first European visit of an American was a greater event seventy years ago than it is to-day. It was less common, at any rate, and was attended with dangers which no longer exist. What it was to Irving we gather from his letters, which may still be read with pleasure, though nothing like the pleasure they afforded his friends, who were more interested in his itinerary than it is possible for us to be. He reached Bordeaux after what the sailors call "a lady's voyage," much improved in health, and enough of a sailor to climb to the masthead, and go out on the main topsail yard. He remained at Bordeaux about six weeks, seeing what there was to see, and studying to improve himself in the language. From Bordeaux he proceeded to Marseilles by diligence, accompanied by an eccentric American doctor, who pretended that Irving was an English prisoner,

whom a young French officer that was with them had in custody, much to the regret of some girls at Tonneins, who pitied "le pauvre garçon," and his prospect of losing his head, and supplied him with a bottle of wine, for which they would not take any recompense. At Nismes he began to have misgivings about his passports, of which he had two, neither accurate, his eyes being described as blue in one, and gray in the other. He had a ~~great deal of trouble with his passports, first and last,~~ but he worried through it, with considerable loss of temper, and, after a detention at Nice, finally set sail in a felucca for Genoa. From Genoa, where he resided upwards of two months, he started for Messina, falling in with a privateer, or pirate, on the way, who frightened the captain and crew, and relieved them of about half their provisions, besides some of their furniture, and a watch and some clothes out of the trunks of the passengers. From Genoa he proceeded to Syracuse, where he explored the celebrated Ear of Dionysius, and set out with a party for Catania, and thence to Palermo, where he arrived at the latter end of the Carnival. He reached Naples on March 7, 1805, and after resting a few days, made a night ascent of Mount Vesuvius, where he had a tremendous view of the crater, that poured out a stream of red-hot lava, the sulphurous smoke of which stifled him, so much so, that but for the shifting of the wind he might have shared the fate of Pliny.

Twenty days later he entered ~~Rome~~ by the Lateral Gate. Here he met a fellow-countryman, in the person of Washington Alston, who was about four years his elder, whose taste for art had been awakened at Newport by his association with Malbone, the famous miniature painter, and who was already more than a painter of promise. "I do not think," Irving wrote years after, "that I have ever been more completely captivated on a first acquaintance. He was of a light and graceful form, with large, blue eyes, and black, silken hair, waving and curling round a pale, expressive countenance. Everything about him bespoke the man of intellect and refinement. His conversation was copious, animated, and highly graphic, warmed by genial sensibility and benevolence, and enlivened by chaste and gentle humor."

Irving and Alston fraternized, and spent the twenty-second birthday of the former in seeing some of the finest collections of paintings in Rome, the painter teaching the traveller how to visit them to the most advantage, leading him always to the masterpieces, and passing the others without notice. They rambled in company around the Eternal City and its environs, and Irving contrasted their different pursuits and prospects, favoring as he did so those of Alston, who was to reside amid the delightful scenes among which they were, surrounded by famous works of art and classic and historic monu-

ments, and by men of congenial tastes, while he was to return home to the dry study of the law, for which he had no relish, and, as he feared, no talent. "Why might I not remain here, and be a painter?" he thought, and he mentioned the idea to his friend, who caught at it with eagerness. They would take an apartment together, and he would give him all the instruction and assistance in his power. But it was not to be; their lots in life were differently cast. So Irving resigned the transient, but delightful, prospect of becoming a painter. During his sojourn in Rome he attended the conversaziones of Torlonia, the banker, who treated him with great distinction, and, calling him aside when he came to make his adieu, asked him, in French, if he was not a relative of General Washington? He was also introduced to the Baron de Humboldt, Minister of Prussia to the Court of Rome, and brother to the celebrated traveller and savant, and to Madam de Staël, who astounded him by the amazing flow of her conversation, and the multitude of questions with which she plied him.

Irving started for Paris on the 11th of April, and reached it on the 24th of May. His stay in Paris, which extended over four months, was a round of sight-seeing and amusement. One night he went to the Theatre Montansier, where the acting was humorous, but rather gross; another night he went to the Imperial Academy of Music, where he saw the opera of "Alceste"; a

third night he went to the theatre of Jeunes Artistes, where boys acted plays; and a fourth to the theatre of Port St. Martin. He made the acquaintance at this time of another American painter, Vanderlyn, a man of genius, in whom he was much interested, and who made a sketch of him in crayons. His mental improvement was not neglected in the gay capital, for he bought a botanical dictionary, and took two months' tuition in French.

Irving arrived in London on the 8th of October, after a tour through the Netherlands. He found lodgings to his liking in Norfolk Street, Strand, not far from the city, and being in the vicinity of the theatres, he devoted most of his evenings to visiting them. Three great actors were then playing—John Kemble, Cooke, and Mrs. Siddons, and in his correspondence with his brother William he described the impression they made on him. Kemble was a very studied actor, he thought. His performances were correct and highly-finished paintings, but much labored. He never led the spectators to forget him in "Othello," it was Kemble they saw throughout, not the jealous Moor. He was cold, artificial, and unequal, and he wanted mellowness in the tender scenes. He was fine in passages when he played "Jaffier," but great only in Zanga, whom, for the moment, he fancied himself. Cooke was next to him, though rather confined in his range. His Iago was admirable; his Richard, he was told, was

equally good ; and in Sir Pertinax Mc Sycophant he left nothing to be desired. But Mrs. Siddons— if he wrote what he thought of her, his praises would be thought exaggerated. “ Her looks, her voice, her gestures delighted me. She penetrated in a moment to my heart. She froze and melted it by turns. A glance of her eye, a start, an exclamation, thrilled through my very frame. The more I see her, the more I admire her. I hardly breathe while she in on the stage. She works up my feelings till I am like a mere child.”

Irving set out from Gravesend on the 18th of January, 1806, and reached New York after a stormy passage of sixty-four days. He had contradicted the prophecy of the captain with whom he originally sailed—that he would go overboard before he got across ; and of Judge Kent, who declared he was not long for this world. He returned in good health, and resumed his legal studies, which were advanced enough to enable him to pass an examination in the ensuing November, which ended in his admission to the bar. He entered the office of his brother John, at No. 3 Wall Street, and while waiting for clients who never came, he turned his attention to literature more seriously than he had ever done before. There was more room in it than in the overcrowded profession of the law ; so much room, indeed, that a young man of his talents might do almost anything that he chose. There was no fear of competitors, at any rate for authorship,

as a craft, had no followers, except Charles Brockden Brown, who was still editing the *Literary Magazine*, and perhaps John Dennie, whose reputation, such as it was, rested on his *Lay Preacher*, and who was editing the *Port Folio*. The few poets of which America boasted were silent. Trumbull, the author of "McFingal," which was published the year before Irving's birth, was a Judge of the Superior Court; Dwight, whose "Conquest of Canaan" was published three years later, was merely the President of Yale College; Barlow, whose "Vision of Columbus" was published two years later still, and who had returned to this country after shining abroad as a diplomatist, was living in splendor on the banks of the Potomac, and brooding over that unreadable poem which he expanded into the epic of "The Columbiad"; and Freneau, by all odds the best of our earlier versifiers, who had published a collection of his effusions in 1795, had abandoned the Muses, and was sailing a sloop between Savannah, Charleston, and the West Indies. Pierpont, who was two years younger than Irving, was a private tutor in South Carolina; Dana was a student at Harvard, and Bryant, a youth of twelve, at Cummingtown, was scribbling juvenile poems, which were being published in a newspaper at Northampton.

The library of Irving's father was rich in Elizabethan writers, among whom Chaucer and Spenser were his early favorites, and it contained

the classics of the eighteenth century, in ~~ver~~his and prose, not forgetting the *Spectator* and *Tatler* and *Rambler*, and the works of the ingenious Dr. Goldsmith. Everybody who read fiction was familiar with the novels of Fielding and Smollett, and lovers of political literature were familiar with the speeches of Burke and the letters of Junius. Everybody read (or could read) the poetical works of Cowper and Burns, Campbell's "Pleasures of Hope," and Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel," and whatever else in the shape of verse American publishers thought it worth their while to reprint for them; for then, as now, they were willing to enlighten their countrymen at the expense of British authors.

Equipped with a liberal education, which he had imbibed from English literature, and with the practice which he had gained in writing for the paper of his brother Peter, which was discontinued shortly before his return to America, Irving cast about for a field of authorship in which he might safely venture. His inclination was toward the writing of essays, in which he had had considerable experience, and the taste of his friend Paulding, who was still living under the roof of his brother William, was in the same direction. They put their heads together, and sketched out a plan of publication, in which they might have their fling at men and things, and which should come out in numbers

as whenever it suited their pleasure and convenience. The title that they selected was "Salmagundi," which is derived from the French word *salmigondis*, which is made up of two Latin words *salgama* and *condita*, signifying preserved pickles. Johnson defines the word as "a mixture of chopped meat and pickled herring with oil, vinegar, pepper, and onions," which, no doubt, is an appetizing dish when one has become accustomed to it. Irving and Paulding were joined by William Irving, and the three resolved themselves into what the Spaniards call a *junta*,—i. e. Launcelot Langstaff, Anthony Evergreen, and William Wizard. The first number of "Salmagundi" was issued on January 24th, 1807, the last on January 25th, 1808, the twenty numbers of which it consisted covering just the true-love epoch of the old ballads, "A twelvemonth and a day." The time, which was ripe for almost anything in the shape of American literature, was so propitious for a periodical of this kind, that the success of the first number was decisive. There was no home literature then to speak of, as I have already hinted, and the city in which this bright venture appeared was a mere town compared with the Babel of to-day, scarcely numbering 80,000 inhabitants. It was not difficult to make a sensation in a place of that size, in a barren literary period, and "Salmagundi" certainly made a great one. Everybody talked about it, and wondered who its writers could

be, and nobody was much the wiser for his wonderment, ~~for the secret was~~ well kept. It would be idle now to attempt to distinguish the share of the different writers, for, as Paulding wrote afterward, in the uniform edition of his works, in which it was included, "The thoughts of the authors were often so mingled together in these essays, and they were so literally joint productions, that it would be difficult as well as useless to assign each his exact share."

Authors, there were none in New York, with the exception of the authors of "Salmagundi," though there was no lack of writers, so called, among whom figured Samuel Latham Mitchill, practicer in physic (like Johnson's friend Levett), lawyer and retired Indian commissioner, member of Congress, and of various learned societies, and editor of the *Medical Repository*. This gentleman, who wrote largely, and was a butt to the wits of the day, had lately published a "Picture of New York," which, if not funny itself, was a source of fun to others, particularly to Irving and his brother Peter, who determined to burlesque it. With this object in view they made many notes, and not to be behind its erudite author, who began his work with an account of the aborigines, they began theirs with the creation of the world. Started shortly after the publication of "Salmagundi," it proceeded slowly and with many interruptions, until the following January, when Peter Irving departed for Liver-

pool on urgent business. Left to himself, his forsaken collaborateur changed the whole plan of the work, condensing the great mass of notes which they had accumulated into five introductory chapters, and commencing at a considerably later period, the new Genesis being the dynasty of the Dutch in New York. Laid aside for a time, he resumed it in the summer, at a country house, at Ravenswood, near Hellgate, whither he had retired in order to prepare it for the press. A stupendous hoax, it was launched with a series of small hoaxes, the first of which appeared in the *Evening Post* of October 25th, 1809, in the shape of a paragraph narrating the disappearance from his lodging of a small elderly gentleman, by the name of Knickerbocker. He was stated to be dressed in an old black coat and a cocked hat, and it was intimated that there were some reasons for believing that he was not in his right mind. Great anxiety was felt, and any information concerning him would be thankfully received at the Columbian Hotel, Mulberry street, or at the office of the paper. This feeler was followed in a week or two by a communication from "A Traveller," who professed to have seen him some weeks before by the side of the road, a little above Kingsbridge. "He had in his hands a small bundle, tied in a red bandanna handkerchief; he appeared to be travelling northward, and was very much fatigued and exhausted." Ten days later (November 6th), Mr. Seth Han-

daside, landlord of the Independent Columbian Hotel, inserted a card in the same paper, in which he declared that there had been found in the room of the missing man, Mr. Diedrich Knickerbocker, a *curious kind of a written book*, in his own handwriting; and he wished the editor to notify him, if he was alive, that if he did not return and pay off his bill for board, he would have to dispose of his book to satisfy him for the same. The bait took, so much so that one of the city authorities actually waited upon Irving's brother, John, and consulted him on the propriety of offering a reward for the mythical Diedrich!

To these "puffs preliminary" was added the precaution of having the manuscript set up in Philadelphia, which lessened the danger of the real character of the work being discovered before its appearance

The "History of New York," which was published in this city on the 6th of December, 1809, was a success in more ways than one. Its whim and satire amused the lovers of wit and humor, and its irreverence towards the early Dutch settlers of the State annoyed and angered their descendants. Between these two classes of readers it was much talked about, and largely circulated. The *Monthly Anthology*, the forerunner of the *North American Review*, pronounced it the wittiest book our press had ever produced; and Scott, to whom a copy of the second edition was

sent by Irving's friend, Henry Brevort, and upon whom, from his ignorance of American parties and politics, much of its concealed satire was lost, owned, that looking at its simple and obvious meaning only, he had never read anything so closely resembling the style of Dean Swift as the annals of Diedrich Knickerbocker. Bryant, who was a youth at college when it came out, committed a portion of it to memory to repeat as a declamation before his class, but was so overcome with laughter when he appeared on the floor, that he was unable to proceed, and drew upon himself the rebuke of his tutor. Fifty years later, when he delivered a discourse on the life, character, and genius of Irving, his admiration had not subsided. "When I compare it with other works of wit and humor of a similar length," he said, "I find that, unlike most of them, it carries the reader to the conclusion without weariness or satiety, so unsought, spontaneous, self-suggested are the wit and the humor. The author makes us laugh, because he can no more help it than we can help laughing." He refers to the opinion of Scott, already quoted, and remarks that the rich vein of Irving was of a quality quite distinct from the dry drollery of Swift, and he detects the influence of his reading. "I find in this work more traces than in his other writings, of what Irving owed to the earlier authors in our language. The quaint poetic coloring, and often the phraseology, be-

tray the disciple of Chaucer and Spenser. We are conscious of a flavor of the olden time, as of a racy wine of some rich vintage—

‘Cooled a long age in the deep-delvèd earth.’

I will not say that there are no passages in this work which are not worthy of their context; that we do not sometimes meet with phraseology which we could wish changed; that the wit does not sometimes run wild, and drop here and there a jest which we could willingly spare. We forgive, we overlook, we forget all this as we read, in consideration of the entertainment we have enjoyed, and of that which beckons us forward in the next page. Of all mock-heroic works, Knickerbocker's ‘History of New York’ is the gayest, the airiest, and the least tiresome.”

Irving's next literary labor was the editorship of a monthly publication, which had been established in Philadelphia, and which, from its title, *Select Reviews*, would appear to have been of an eclectic character. Its name was changed to the *Analectic Magazine* during his management, which extended through the years 1813 and 1814, and it bade fair to be successful, until its proprietor was ruined by the failure of the New York publishers of “Salmagundi.” Irving's contributions to this dead and gone old periodical consisted of critical notices of new works by English and American authors; among others one by his friend Paulding, who had dropped into

poetry with a "Lay of the Scottish Fiddle"; of a series of biographies of the naval heroes of our second war with England; and of a revised and enlarged memoir of the poet Campbell, which he had written at the request of his brother a year or two before, to accompany an American edition of his poetical works. Irving signed off what was owing to him, and peace with England being declared shortly after, he departed for Europe for the second time on the 25th of May, 1815. He was a partner in a mercantile house, which his brothers Peter and Ebenezer had started in Liverpool, and it was quite as much to assist the former, who was in ill-health, as to divert himself, that he undertook the journey. He remained at Liverpool for some time, examining the affairs of "P. & E. Irving & Co.," which had fallen into confusion on account of the sickness of his brother and the death of his principal clerk, mastering details, and learning book-keeping, in order to straighten out their books. The business of the Irving brothers ended in failure, owing to a variety of causes, which there is no occasion to specify now, and the literary member of the firm turned his attention again to the only business for which he was really fitted. He had renewed his acquaintance with Alston, who was now residing in London, and had met Leslie, the artist, both of whom were making designs for a new edition of his "History of New York."

The summer of 1817 found Irving in London, whence he paid a visit to Sydenham to Campbell, who was simmering over his "Specimens of the English Poets," and where he dined with Murray, the bookseller, who showed him a long letter from Byron, who was in Italy, and was engaged on the fourth canto of "Childe Harold," and who had told him "that he was much happier after breaking with Lady Byron—he hated this still, quiet life." From London he proceeded to Edinburgh, whence he walked out to a mansion, which had been taken by Jeffrey, with whom he dined, after which he rattled off by the mail coach to Selkirk, and by chaise to Melrose. On his way to the latter place he stopped at the gate at Abbotsford, and sent in his letter of introduction to Scott. The glorious old minstrel himself came hobbling to the gate, and took him by the hand in a way that made him feel as if they were old friends; in a moment he was seated at his hospitable board among his charming family. He passed two days at Abbotsford, rambling about the hills with his host, and visiting the haunts of Thomas the Rhymer, and other spots rendered classic by border tale and song, in a kind of dream. He was delighted with the character and manners of the great man, and it was a constant source of pleasure to him to watch his deportment toward his family, his neighbors, his domestics, his very dogs and cats. "It is a perfect picture to see Scott and his house-

hold assembled of an evening—the dogs stretched before the fire, the cat perched on a chair, Mrs. Scott and the girls sewing, and Scott either reading out of some old romance, or telling border stories. Our amusements were occasionally diversified by a border song from Sophia, who is as well versed in border minstrelsy as her father.” This pilgrimage to Abbotsford, which is described at length in the fifth volume of Lockhart’s “Life of Scott,” was brought about by Campbell. “When you see Tom Campbell,” Scott wrote to one of his friends, “tell him, with my best love, that I have to thank him for making me known to Mr. Washington Irving, who is one of the best and pleasantest acquaintances I have made this many a day.”

~~The house of the Irving brothers~~ succeeded so ill in England that the two resident partners, Peter and Washington, finally made up their minds to go into bankruptcy. The necessary proceedings occupied some months, during which time the latter shut himself up from society, and studied German day and night, partly in the hope that it would be some service to him, and partly to keep off uncomfortable thoughts. His brother William, who was in Congress, had exerted himself to have him made Secretary of Legation at the Court of St. James, but in vain; and his friend, Commodore Decatur, had kept a place for him in the Navy Board, the

salary of which would enable him to live in Washington like a prince. He concluded not to accept it, however, greatly to the chagrin of his brothers, but to remain abroad, and battle with fortune on his own account. So he went up to London again in the summer of 1818, to see if he could not live by his pen.

Nearly nine years had elapsed since the publication of the "History of New York," and with ~~the exception of his reviews and biographies in the *Analectic Magazine*, he had written nothing.~~ His mercantile connection with his brothers had proved disastrous to them as well as to himself, and he was ~~now dependent on his own exertions.~~ If there is anything in experience that fits one for literature, he was better fitted for it than ever before. He had passed through troubles which had deepened his knowledge of life, having lost his father, who died shortly before the completion of "Salmagundi," and his mother, who died about ten years later, and whose death was still fresh in his memory. Between these two sorrows came the tragedy which darkened his young manhood, and was never forgotten—the death of Matilda Hoffman, the young lady to whom he was attached, who closed her brief existence at the age of eighteen, while he was composing the amusing annals of Mr. Diedrich Knickerbocker. He was a bold American who would dare to attempt at ~~that~~ time to live by authorship in his own country, which had known

but one professional author, Charles Brockden Brown, who had died about eight years before, at the early age of thirty-nine; but he was a bolder American who would dare to attempt the same hazardous feat in England. Such a man was Irving, who settled down in London in his thirty-sixth year, to see if he could earn his living by his pen. His capital was the practice he already possessed, and some unfinished sketches, upon which he had been engaged, precisely when, or where, we are not told. He set to work on these sketches, with the intention of issuing them in numbers as a periodical publication, and when he had finished enough to make the first number he dispatched the manuscript across the Atlantic to his brother Ebenezer, in February, 1819. It was put to press under the title "The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon," and published in May, simultaneously in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore. It contained six papers, or sketches, of which the perennial Rip Van Winkle soon became a general favorite. There was an immediate demand for "The Sketch-Book," for as one of Irving's critics observed, the honor of our national literature was so associated with his name, that the pride as well as the better feelings of his countrymen, were interested in accumulating the gifts of his genius. He was congratulated on resuming the pen, in the *Analæctic*, by his friend Gulian C. Verplanck (who, by the way, had not taken kindly

to his Knickerbocker), who saw in every page his rich, and sometimes extravagant humor, his gay and graceful fancy, his peculiar choice and felicity of original expression, as well as the pure and fine moral feeling which imperceptibly pervaded every thought and image. The second number, which was finished before the publication of the first, was enriched by the exquisite paper on Rural Life in England, and the pathetic story of The Broken Heart. Mr. Richard Henry Dana wrote of the former, in the *North American Review*, that it left its readers as restored and cheerful as if they had been passing an hour or two in the very fields and woods themselves; and that his scenery was so true, so full of little beautiful particulars, and so varied, and yet so connected in character, that the distant was brought nigh, and the whole was seen and felt like a delightful reality. A copy of this number was placed by one of Irving's friends in the hands of William Godwin, the famous author of "Caleb Williams," who found everywhere in it the marks of a mind of the utmost elegance and refinement (a thing, you know, that he was not exactly prepared to look for in an American), and he was pleased to say that he scarcely knew an Englishman who could have written it. Another Englishman was of the same gracious opinion as this illustrious novelist—Mr. William Jerdan, the editor of the *London Literary Gazette*, who began to reprint the first number of "The Sketch-Book" in

his periodical, which was somehow regarded as an authority in literature. A copy of the third number, which was published in America in September, reached England, and came into the possession of a London publisher, who was considering the propriety of bringing out the whole work. This determined Irving to revise the numbers that he had already published, that they might, at least, come before the English public correctly, and he accordingly took them to Murray, with whom he left them for examination, stating that he had materials on hand for a second volume. The great man declined to engage in their publication, because he did not see "that scope in the nature of it to make satisfactory accounts" between them; but he offered to do what he could to promote their circulation, and was ready to attend to any future plan of his. Irving then bethought himself of Scott, to whom he sent the printed numbers, with a letter, in which he observed that a reverse had taken place in his affairs since he had the pleasure of enjoying his hospitality, which made the exercise of his pen important to him. He soon received a reply from Scott, who spoke very highly of his talents, and offered him the editorship of an Anti-Jacobin periodical, which had been projected at Edinburgh, the salary of which would be £500 a year certain, with the reasonable prospect of further advantages. When the parcel reached him, as it did at Edinburgh, he added,

in a postscript, "I am just here, and have glanced over the Sketch-Book ; it is positively beautiful, and increases my desire to *crimp* you if possible." Irving immediately declined the editorship proposed to him, feeling peculiarly unfitted for the post, and being as useless for regular service as one of his country Indians or a Don Cossack. Having by this time concluded to print the book at his own risk, he found no difficulty in finding a publisher, who was unlucky enough to fail just as it was getting into fair circulation. Scott came up to London at this juncture, for the purpose of receiving his baronetcy, and he called upon Murray, who now saw "that scope in the nature" of the Sketch-Book which it had lacked before, and who printed an edition of the first volume, and put the second volume to press, and so became Irving's publisher.

The "Sketch-Book" put four hundred pounds in the pocket of Irving, and made him famous. Jeffrey wrote of it in the *Edinburgh Review*, that he had seldom seen a work that gave him a more pleasing impression of the writer's character, or a more favorable one of his judgment and taste ; Lockhart declared in *Blackwood* that "Mr. Washington Irving is one of our first favorites among the English writers of this age, and he is not a bit the less so for being born in America;" and Mrs. Siddons gave it the seal of her authority, and intimidated Irving, when he was introduced to her, by saying, in her most

tragic way, "You've made me weep." Byron, who read all the new works of the time with avidity, wrote to his and Irving's publisher, Murray, "Crayon is very good;" and shortly before his death waxed eloquent in his praise to a young American, who had called upon him, and who, at his request, had brought him a copy of the "Sketch-Book." "I handed it to him, when, seizing it with enthusiasm, he turned to the 'Broken Heart.' 'That,' said he, 'is one of the finest things ever written on earth, and I want to hear an American read it. But stay—do you know Irving?' I replied that I had never seen him. 'God bless him!' exclaimed Byron: 'He is a genius; and ~~he has something better than~~ genius—a heart. I wish I could see him, but I fear I never shall. Well, read the "Broken Heart"—yes, the "Broken Heart." What a word! In closing the first paragraph, I said, 'Shall I confess it? I do believe in broken hearts.' 'Yes,' exclaimed Byron, 'and so do I, and so does everybody but philosophers and fools?' While I was reading one of the most touching portions of that mournful piece, I observed that Byron wept. He turned his eyes upon me, and said, 'You see me weep, sir. Irving himself never wrote that story without weeping; nor can I hear it without tears. I have not wept much in this world, for trouble never brings tears to my eyes, but I always have tears for the "Broken Heart."'

He concluded by praising the verses of Moore at

the end of the story, and asking if there were many such men as Irving in America? 'God don't send many such spirits into this world.'

The lives of authors are not often interesting, apart from the light which they shed upon their writings, and the life of Irving was not, I think, an exception to the rule. What it was hitherto we have seen, and what it was hereafter I shall show, though not in its details, which were neither striking nor important. Five years had now elapsed since he left America, and twelve more years were to elapse before he returned to it. He had published his third book, and had made a name for himself in England; in other words, he had found his true vocation, and it would be his own fault if he did not pursue it with honor and profit. The summer of 1820 found him in Paris with his brother Peter, and before the close of the year he had made the acquaintance of Moore, the poet, who was sporting in exile in France, while his friends were trying to settle a claim which the English Government had against him, on account of the defalcation of the deputy who had filled, in his place, the office of Registrar of the Admiralty Court of Bermuda, to which he had been appointed about seventeen years before. Moore jotted down in his Diary that they met at the *table d'hôte*, at Meurice's (the most expensive hotel in Paris), and that the successful author was "a good-looking and intelligent-mannered man."

Seven days later they met at Moore's cottage in the Champs Elysées, and scarcely a day passed without their seeing each other. Moore was trying to work, now on his *Life of Sheridan*, and now on an Egyptian romance, but it was the merest pretence, as his *Diary* bears witness; for he notes, in one entry, that he had been no less than five weeks in writing one hundred and ninety-two lines of verse; and in another, when he thought he had been more industrious, that he had written nearly fifty lines in a week. The fertility of Irving, who wrote with ease, when he could write at all, astonished him. "Irving called near dinner time," he wrote on March 19th, 1821; "asked him to stay and share our roast chicken with us, which he did. He has been hard at work writing lately; in the course of ten days he has written about one hundred and thirty pages of the size of those in the 'Sketch-Book;' this is amazing rapidity."

Another writer was in exile in France at this time, a fellow townsman of Irving, John Howard Payne, who had taken the critics of New York by storm when he played Young Norval at the Park Theatre; who had gone to England about two years before Irving, where he became a dramatic author, with some success, and a manager, with none at all; and who is now chiefly remembered by the song of "Home, Sweet Home." London growing too small for him, he escaped to Paris, where Irving breakfasted

with him, after which they paid a visit to Talma together.

A whim for travelling, which frequently seized him, sent Irving back to London in the summer of 1821, with no definite object in view, unless it was to see his friends, and the approaching coronation of George the Fourth. He was fortunate enough to witness the procession from a stand on the outside of Westminster Abbey, and to meet with Scott, who told him that he should have seen it from within the Abbey, which he might easily have done, as his name would have got him in anywhere. He brought over with him a petite comedy of Payne's, with the ominous title of "The Borrower," and made a fruitless attempt to have it produced on the stage. He also brought over the manuscript of a new book, his speed in writing which had so amazed Moore, and worked upon it when he was in the humor. When it was finished, which was not until the following winter, he was waited upon by Colburn, the publisher, with a letter of introduction from Campbell, and an offer of a thousand guineas. He was not inclined to leave Murray, who had treated him very handsomely, and was anxious to publish another book for him. Irving named the price he wished—fifteen hundred guineas, which rather staggered the prince of booksellers. "If you had said a thousand guineas," he began. "You shall have it for a thousand guineas," replied Irving, and the bargain was completed.

Concerning Irving's fourth book, "Bracebridge Hall," which was published in England and America in May, 1832, critical opinions differed. The *North American Review* for July, speaking in the person of Mr. Edward Everett, its editor, had no hesitation in pronouncing it equal to anything which the then age of English literature had produced in the department of essay-writing, and praised it for its admirable sketches of life and manners, highly curious in themselves, and rendered almost important by the good-natured mock gravity, the ironical reverence, and lively wit with which they were described. Jeffrey recognized the singular sweetness of the composition, and the mildness of the sentiments, but thought the rhythm and melody of the sentences excessive, in that they wore an air of mannerism, and created an impression of the labor that must have been bestowed upon what was but a secondary attribute of good writing.

Wearied by his London life, Irving started on a tour on the Continent, which lasted about a month, and which finally brought up at Paris. He was not in trim for composition when he settled down again, but was haunted by the dread of future failure, a kind of nervous horror which frequently overpowered him. His poetic friend, Moore, had returned to England, where he had been delivered of his "Loves of the

Angels," but his dramatic friend, Payne, was still an exile in Paris, and was the tenant of two residences, one of which, in the Rue Richelieu, he rented to Irving. He succeeded in persuading Irving to join him in his dramatic undertakings, one of which, already far advanced, was "*La Jeunesse de Richelieu*," a French play, which had been acted about thirty years before. They were to divide the profits, if there were any, and Irving's share in the projected manufactures was to be kept secret. They must have worked with great rapidity, for in addition to the play just mentioned they completed a translation of another, entitled "*Azendai*," which was intended to be set to music; besides two others, "*Belles and Bailiffs*," and "*Married and Single*," not forgetting "*Abul Hassan*," a German opera, which Irving had done into English at Dresden. Laden with these productions, Payne set off privately for London, from which he was debarred by his creditors, and put himself in communication with Charles Kemble. While he was undergoing the delay incident to acceptance or rejection, Irving transmitted to him the manuscript of "*Charles II., or the Merry Monarch*" a three act comedy, from the French of "*La Jeunesse de Henri V.*," of which, as far as I can understand, he was nearly, if not quite, the sole author, or adapter. It was sold by Payne to Covent Garden Theatre for two hundred guineas, together with "*La Jeunesse de Richelieu*," and was produced

in the following spring (May, 1824) with great success. "*La Jeunesse de Richelieu*" was produced nearly two years later, and withdrawn after a few nights.

Literary activity returned to Irving during this curious dramatic episode in his career, stimulated, no doubt, by a letter from Murray, who asked him what he might expect from him in the course of the winter. He replied that he should probably have two more volumes of the "*Sketch-Book*" ready by spring, and began to write the story of *Wolfert Webber*, which he soon laid aside. His journal chronicles the progress of his labor, which proceeded at a rapid rate, in spite of his dinings out, hastened, perhaps, by the title which he found for his new work, "*Tales of a Traveller*," and by Murray's offering twelve hundred guineas for it, without seeing the manuscript. When it was finished he took it over to London, where he met Murray, "who behaved like a gentleman," *i. e.*, gave him fifteen hundred guineas for it, as well as several celebrities, including William Spencer, Proctor, Rogers, and Moore, the last of whom went with him to Bowood, the seat of Lord Lansdowne. He was not brilliant as a conversationist at this time, whatever he may have been later, for Moore notes in his Diary that at two dinners which he mentions, he was sleepy, and did not open his mouth, and adds, curtly, "Not strong as a lion, but delightful as a domestic animal."

The "Tales of a Traveller" appeared in two volumes in England, and in America in four parts. It sold well in the former country; but it can hardly be said to have been a literary success in either, especially in the latter, where the press were hostile to it. Wilson, speaking through the mouth of Timothy Tickler, in *Blackwood*, said, "I have been terribly disappointed in the 'Tales of a Traveller;'" and the reviewer of the *London Quarterly*, though he praises the story of Buckthorne, from which he thought it probable that he might, as a novelist, prove no contemptible rival to Goldsmith, warns him that he must in future be true to his own reputation throughout, and correct the habits of indolence, which so considerable a part of the work evince.

Irving's next intellectual labor after his return to France, was the planning of a series of papers, the proper execution of which demanded, I think, a weightier pen than he possessed, consisting, as it did, of serious essays upon American Manners, National Life, Public Prosperity, Probity of Dealings, Education of Youth, and such like grave and momentous problems. He was interrupted in the writing by a letter from Mr. Alexander H. Everett, Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States at Madrid, whom he had previously met at Paris, and who had, at his request, attached him to the embassy. This letter contained his passport, and a proposition

from Mr. Everett that he should translate Navarrete's "*Voyages of Columbus*," which was then in the press. It was compiled by this accomplished scholar from the papers of Columbus, as preserved by the famous Bishop Las Casas, and of extracts from his journal; and it contained, as Irving found shortly after his arrival at Madrid, many documents hitherto unknown, which threw additional light on the discovery of the New World; but was defective as a whole (at any rate for his purpose), in that it was rather a rich mass for history, than history itself. He abandoned, therefore, the idea of translating it, and began to institute fresh researches on his own account, examining manuscripts, and taking voluminous notes for a regular *Life of the great navigator*.

Irving commenced his task in February, 1826, and labored upon it unceasingly for six months, sometimes writing all day, and until twelve at night. His attention was diverted from it in August by the "*Conquest of Granada*," which so interested him that he devoted himself to it till November, when he threw aside the rough draft, and returned to his greater work, which was not ready for the press until July of the following year. Leslie had sounded Murray about the letter before it was begun, but the wily publisher fought shy at first. "He would gladly," he says, "receive anything from you of original matter, which he considers certain of success, whatever

it might be ; but with regard to the *Voyages of Columbus*, he can not form any opinion at present." When the manuscript was finished Irving sent it to England, to the care of his friend, Colonel Aspinwall, American Consul at London, whom he made his agent in the disposal of it, and wrote a letter to Murray, in which he stated the sum he wanted for it—three thousand guineas ; but also stated that he would be willing to publish on shares. Colonel Aspinwall played his cards so well that Murray concluded not to publish it on shares, but to pay the three thousand guineas out and out. The manuscript was shown to Southey, who pronounced the most unqualified praise of it, both as to matter and manner ; and Murray himself said it was beautiful, beautiful—the best thing that Irving had ever written.

By the publication of "*The Life and Voyages of Columbus*," in 1828, the popularity of Irving, which had waned somewhat since the day when he first burst upon the world of English readers in his "*Sketch-Book*," rose anew, and shone with greater lustre. The importance of the work was recognized on both sides of the water, as well as the brilliancy of its execution. Jeffrey, who reviewed it in the *Edinburgh*, declared that it was not only excellent, but that it would endure. "For we mean," he explained, "not merely that the book will be known and referred to twenty or thirty years hence, and will pass in

solid binding into every considerable collection; but that it will supersede all former works on the same subject, and never be itself superseded." Not less enthusiastic was the carefully considered opinion of Irving's friend, Everett, who originally suggested the translation from Navarrete out of which it had grown, and who pronounced it, in the *North American Review*, one of the few books which are at once the delight of readers and the despair of critics. "It is as nearly perfect as any work can be; and there is little or nothing left for the reviewer but to write at the bottom of every page, as Voltaire said he would be obliged to do if he published a commentary on Racine, '*Pulchré! bene! optimé!*'" He has at length filled up the void that before existed in this respect, in the literature of the world, and produced a work which will fully satisfy the public, and supersede the necessity of any future labors in the same field. While we venture to predict that the adventures of Columbus will hereafter be read only in the work of Mr. Irving, we can not but think it a beautiful coincidence that the task of duly celebrating the achievements of the discoverer of our continent should have been reserved for one of its inhabitants; and that the earliest professed author of first-rate talent who appeared among us should have devoted one of his most important and finished works to this pious purpose.

**'Such honors Ilion to her hero paid,
And peaceful slept the mighty Hector's shade.'**


For the particular kind of historical writing in which Mr. Irving is fitted to labor and excel, the 'Life of Columbus' is undoubtedly one of the very best—perhaps we might say, without fear of any mistake, the very best—subject afforded by the annals of the world."

The magnitude of the task which he had completed so satisfactorily, left Irving leisure to make a tour which he had planned with his brother Peter, but the ill-health of that gentleman, who now returned by slow stages to Paris, compelled him to forego the pleasure of his company, and to replace it by the company of two Russian diplomatists, with whom he set out on March 1st, by the diligence for Cordova. They reached Granada in safety, notwithstanding the robbers who were said to beset the roads, and spent several days in traversing the city and its environs. From Granada the travelers proceeded to Malaga, and thence by a circuitous route to Gibraltar, after which they started for Cadiz, where Irving left his companions, being impatient to get to Seville, and to correct and complete the rough draft of the manuscript of the "Conquest of Granada," which diverted his attention for upwards of three months at Madrid, while he was engaged upon his "Life of Columbus."

The summer heat being overpowering at Seville, Irving removed to a little country-seat on a hill, about eight miles from Cadiz, of which and its beautiful bay, it commanded a view on one side, while another embraced the distant mountains of Ronda. Here he dispatched to England half the first volume of the "Conquest of Granada," as a fair sample of the whole, and authorized Colonel Aspinwall to dispose of it to Murray, or any other leading and respectable bookseller, for two thousand guineas, or as near that sum as he could get. Before a month was over he received a letter from Murray, who was waiting for the corrected copy of Columbus, in order to issue a new edition, and who had purchased from Wilkie a sketch that he had made of Irving's likeness, which he meant to prefix to it. A second letter from Murray contained what Irving considered the best critique that he had ever had as to his general reputation with the public. It was in relation to a monthly magazine which Murray was about to set up, on a purely literary and scientific basis, and which he offered Irving a thousand pounds a year to edit, besides paying him liberally for any articles which he might contribute. In fact, the salary, with other offers for casual writing, would insure him at least seven thousand dollars a year.

Irving declined Murray's proposal, as he had declined a similar one from Scott nine years before, partly because it would oblige him to fix

his residence out of America, and partly because he was unwilling to shackle himself with any periodical labor. Murray concluded to purchase his new book at the price which he had demanded—two thousand guineas—and published it early in 1829, under the title of “A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada,” not as from the manuscript of Fray Antonio Agapida, a *nom de guerre*, which Irving had adopted, but as by Irving himself—an unwarrantable liberty, he thought, in that it made him, gravely, in his own name, tell many round untruths, and made him, also, responsible as an author, for the existence of the manuscript of Agapida. Coleridge regarded the work as a masterpiece of romantic narrative; Prescott believed that Irving availed himself of all the picturesque and animating movements of the period which he had treated, and that he was not seduced from historical accuracy by the poetical aspect of his subject; and Bryant, a fine Spanish scholar, as well as an admirable literary critic, maintained that it was one of the most delightful of his works—an exact history, for such it is admitted to be by those who have searched most carefully the ancient records of Spain—yet so full of personal incident, so diversified with surprising turns of fortune, and these wrought up with such picturesque effect, that, to use an expression of Pope, a young lady might read it by mistake for a romance. It is a pleasant thing for an author to win approba-



tion from members of his own craft—much pleasanter, on the whole, perhaps, than to win the less intelligent approbation of the public; but unfortunately for his ambition and his pocket, it is only the last which is of substantial benefit to him. It was now withheld from Irving, for the “Conquest of Granada” did not sell. Before it saw the light of publication Irving had returned to the line of biographic studies, which its composition had interrupted, and was busy in tracing out the Voyages of the Companions of Columbus, and had in contemplation a series of Legends connected with the Moorish domination in Spain, upon which he wrote from time to time as the spirit moved him. He made a second visit to Granada in May, 1829, and lodged in the Alhambra, over whose halls and courts he rambled at all hours of the day and night. While he was residing in this romantic old Moorish palace, he was appointed Secretary of Legation to London, whither he repaired in October. Here two honors awaited him: the first being a gold medal, of the value of fifty guineas, which was adjudged, to him by the Council of the Royal Society of Literature, the other, the degree of LL.D., which was conferred upon him by the University of Oxford. Notwithstanding these honors, of which any man of letters might well be proud, and of the personal esteem and affection with which he was regarded, there can be no doubt that his reputation

had lessened since the publication of the "Sketch-Book," in 1820, and of the "Life and Voyages of Columbus," in 1828. Whether his intermediate and later works were of a lower order of literary excellence than these were admitted to possess, or whether that many-headed beast, the public, was weary of them, is a question I do not feel called upon to decide. It is enough to note here that his popularity was so greatly on the wane that he parted with the "Voyages of the Companions of Columbus" to Murray for only five hundred guineas; and that his sharp business friend, Colonel Aspinwall, could only obtain a thousand guineas for his next work, "The Alhambra," and this not from Murray, but from Colburn and Bentley. Of the reception of these characteristic studies of old Spain and the old voyagers, I have no knowledge, except, that Mr. Edward Everett wrote concerning the last, in the *North American Review*, that it was equal, in literary value, to any other of the same class, with the exception of the "Sketch-Book," and that he should not be surprised if it were read as extensively as even that very popular production; and that Prescott, the historian, characterized it in his "History of Ferdinand and Isabella," as the "beautiful Spanish Sketch-Book." Of Irving's diplomatic life, his presentation at court, etc., I shall not speak, nor of the celebrities whom he met, only one of whom is likely to interest now. It was Scott, who was then in

London, a broken-down old man, on his way to Italy, and whom he met again at a family dinner, at which he was the only stranger present. "Ah, my dear fellow," said Scott, who was seated as he entered, "time has dealt lightly with you since last we met." The mind of the great magician flickered fitfully during the dinner; now and then he struck up a story in his old way, but the light soon died out, his head sank, and his countenance fell, when he saw that he had failed to bring out his points. When the ladies went up-stairs after dinner, Lockhart said to his guest, "Irving, give Scott your arm." The grand old man, mournful in ruin, took the arm that was offered him, and grasping his cane with the other hand, said, "Ah, the times are changed, my good fellow, since we went over the Eildon hills together. It is all nonsense to tell a man that his mind is not affected when his body is in this state." They never met again; for the mighty minstrel died the next year, and Irving returned to America after an absence of seventeen years, lacking four days.

Irving's arrival was anticipated by his friends, who received him with the greatest cordiality, and gave him a public dinner at the City Hotel, which was presided over by his early friend, Chancellor Kent, who had so promptly dismissed him to the world of shades thirty years before. The ordeal was a trying one to the modest man of letters, who had a nervous horror of personal

publicity, but he acquitted himself creditably, as the newspapers of that day testify. It was, of course, the happiest moment of his life, and was rendered more so because it proved that the misgivings which had haunted him, that his countrymen believed he was alienated from them, were groundless. He spoke of the changes which had come over New York during his absence, the emotions which he had experienced when he beheld it, as he sailed up the harbor, seated in the midst of its watery domain, with the sunshine lighting up its domes, and the forest of masts at its piers as far as the eye could reach; and how his heart throbbed with joy and pride as he felt he had a birthright in the brilliant scene before him. "I am asked how long I mean to remain here? They know but little of my heart or my feelings who can ask me this question. I answer, as long as I live." Here the roof rang with bravos, handkerchiefs were waved, cheers were given over and over again, and he finally sat down, satisfied that he had done better than he expected. Shortly after this dinner Irving repaired to Washington, to settle his accounts with the Government, and to meet the friends of his earlier years—Mr. Louis McLane, late Minister to England, Henry Clay, General Jackson, and others. Returning to New York, he made a trip up the Hudson as far as Tarrytown, and thence to Saratoga and Trenton Falls. He meditated a tour in the western part

of New York, Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee, but he changed his plan, and joined an expedition to the far West, in company with three commissioners appointed to treat with deputations of the different tribes of Indians. He started from Cincinnati on September 3d, reached Independence, Missouri, on the 24th of that month, Fort Gibson, Arkansas, on October 9th, and Montgomery Point, at the mouth of the Arkansas, early in November. A voyage by steamboat down the Mississippi to New Orleans, and thence to Washington, and so back to New York, completed the tour. The ground over which he had traversed, which was then but little known to the inhabitants of the more civilized portions of the United States, and the incidents and experiences of travel with which it was surrounded, determined him to turn them to account. He set about a narrative of what he had seen and undergone, in the midst of other avocations and writing leisurely, completed it by the end of the following year. It was entitled, "A Tour on the Prairies," and was published in London, in 1835, by Murray, from whom Colonel Aspinwall succeeded in obtaining four hundred pounds for it. What reception it met with in England, I know not. It was welcomed here, and by none more warmly than Edward Everett, in the *North American Review*. "To what class of compositions the present work belongs," he wrote, "we are hardly able to say. It can scarcely be

called a book of travels, for there is too much painting of manners and scenery, and too little statistics; it is not a novel, for there is no story; and it is not a romance, for it is all true. It is a sort of sentimental journey, a romantic excursion, in which nearly all the elements of several different kinds of writing are beautifully and gayly blended into a production almost *sui generis*." He then expressed his pride in Irving's sketches of English life, and the gorgeous canvas upon which he had gathered in so much of the glowing imagery of Moorish times, but was more pleased to see him come back laden with the poetical treasures of the primitive wilderness, and with spoils from the uninhabited desert. "We thank him for turning these poor, barbarous *steppes* into classical land, and joining his inspiration to that of Cooper in breathing life and fire into a circle of imagery, which was not known before to exist, for the purposes of the imagination." To revive, perhaps, the *nom de plume*, by which he had become best known among English-reading people, Irving published "A Tour on the Prairies" as the first number of the *Crayon Miscellany*. It was followed in the course of two or three months by a second number, entitled, "Abbotsford and Newstead Abbey," for which Colonel Aspinwall obtained from Murray the sum of four hundred pounds, with a promise of two hundred pounds more when a second edition should be reached. It appears to have

been successful, for Colonel Aspinwall wrote to Irving, "Murray says Abbotsford delights everybody, especially the Lockharts." The third number of the *Crayon Miscellany*, "Legends of Spain," was sent about six weeks later to the same publisher, who declined it at the price demanded, but put it to press on the author's account, whereby Irving realized only one hundred pounds.

Not long after his return to the United States, Irving was applied to by Mr. John Jacob Astor, to write about his settlement of Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia River. He declined the undertaking, being engrossed with other plans, but recommended his nephew, Mr. Pierre Munro Irving, as one who might aid him in preparing the materials, in which case he would have no objection in putting the finishing hand to the work. Mr. Astor caught at the idea, and Mr. Pierre Irving, who was then in Illinois, came to New York, at the request of his uncle, and the pair commenced their joint labors at a country house, belonging to Mr. Astor, at Hellgate. He paid his authors liberally, the younger for his industry as a compiler, the elder for his skill as a literary artist and the use of his name, and was fully satisfied with their endeavors to hand him down to posterity as a colonist as well as a millionaire. "Astoria" was published in 1836. Mr. Edward Everett, speaking, as usual, through the *North American*, saw in it, as a whole, the im-

press of Irving's taste, and sketches of life and character worthy of the pen of Geoffrey Crayon; and an anonymous writer in the London *Spectator*, considered it the most finished narrative of such a series of adventures that was ever written. While Irving was residing at the country seat of Mr. Astor, where he had for companions the poet Halleck, and Charles Astor Bristed, then a lad of fourteen, he met Captain Bonneville, of the United States army, a type of man not uncommon at the time, who had engrafted the hunter and the trapper upon the soldier, and in whom he was much interested. He met this gentleman again in the following winter at Washington, where he was engaged in re-writing and extending his travelling notes, and making maps of the regions he had explored, and he purchased his materials, out of which, together with other facts and details gathered from different sources, conversations, journals of the captain's contemporaries, and the like, he wrought a volume of frontier life, which was published in 1837, as the "Adventures of Captain Bonneville," and for which Bentley paid him nine hundred pounds for an English edition, which was four hundred pounds more than he had paid for "Astoria."

In the course of his home-travels, shortly after his return to America, Irving saw a rural site at Tarrytown, on the Hudson, not far from the residence of his nephew, Oscar, which struck his

fancy. It consisted in ten acres, when he purchased it in the summer of 1835, and contained a cottage about a century old, which he concluded to rebuild into a little rookery in the old Dutch style. He accordingly sent up an architect and workmen, who between them built him a stone house at considerable cost, in which, surrounded with Christmas greens, he was settled with his brother Peter, in January, 1837. In this cosy mansion, which he at first christened "Wolfert's Roost," and afterwards "Sunny Side," he finished the "Adventures of Captain Bonneville," and, his mind still running on the might of Old Spain, which he had illustrated so brilliantly in his "Life of Columbus," he commenced what promised to be a greater work than that, and which like that was to concern itself with Castilian domination in the New World—the "History of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico." When he had made a rough draft of the groundwork of the first volume, he came down to the city to consult authorities in the New York Society Library, where he met Mr. Joseph G. Cogswell, whom he knew, and who asked him what new work he had in hand, sounding him in the interest of Prescott, who had lately published his "History of Ferdinand and Isabella." "Is Mr. Prescott engaged upon an American subject?" inquired Irving. He was told that he was, and that it was the "Conquest of Mexico." With a generosity, of which few men could have

been capable, Irving then and there abandoned his plan, and desired Mr. Cogswell to say as much to Prescott, whose claim to it (supposing he had any) was certainly less than his own, in that he had merely collected materials for it. Prescott acknowledged his courtesy in a grateful letter, in which he dwelt upon the mortification he would have felt if he found him occupying the ground, and expressed a fear that the public would not be so well pleased as himself by Irving's liberal conduct, of which he was not sure that he should have a right in their eyes to avail himself. The giving up of this great task, which occupied Prescott five years, left Irving at leisure to renew his early acquaintance with the British Essayists, and to revise a biographical study which he had executed some fifteen years before. This was a "Life of Goldsmith," which he had prepared at Paris, for Galignani, for a collection of British Authors, that he undertook to edit, and which he now re-wrote for the "Family Library," of which the Harpers were the publishers. This was followed by a second and a much less important biographical study, a "Life of Margaret Davidson," the younger of two American sisters, who had a childish talent for writing verse, which her friends called poetry, and who had died of consumption in her sixteenth year.

Two political honors were offered Irving in his fifty-fifth year, one being an unanimous nomina-

tion as Mayor of New York, from Tammany Hall, the other the appointment of Secretary of the Navy, from President Van Buren. He accepted neither, wisely preferring to the doubtful distinction they might have bestowed upon him, the peaceful security of his cottage and the society of his relatives. The relinquishment of the "Conquest of Mexico," left him at leisure for lesser undertakings, which he found in writing a series of papers for the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, his connection with which lasted from March, 1839, to March, 1841. Before the latter date (February 10th) he received ~~what he called~~ "the crowning honor of his life." It came in the shape of the appointment of Minister to Spain, which was forwarded to him by Daniel Webster, who remarked, when sufficient time had elapsed for the news to reach him, "Washington Irving is the ~~most astonished man in New York.~~" Hard upon his appointment the new minister was called on to attend the dinner which the citizens of New York gave Dickens, at which it was decided that he must preside, and where he did preside, with much trepidation, making one of the shortest dinner speeches on record. "There," he said, as he ~~concluded~~ his broken sentences by proposing the health of Dickens, as the guest of the nation, "There! I told you I should break down, and I've done it."

~~Irving embarked for Europe~~ for the third time, on April 10th, 1841. He soon reached London,

where he waited upon his friend, Edward Everett, then American Minister, who presented him to Queen Victoria, at the levee, where he met several of his old acquaintances, among them the ministers, Lord Aberdeen, Sir Robert Peel, etc., who were cordial in their recognitions. He also met, at a dinner party at Mr. Everett's, the veteran poet and wit, Rogers, who took him in his arms in a paternal manner; and at an anniversary dinner of the Literary Fund, he met Moore, upon whom the cares of the world were thickening, and to whom he declared his intention of not speaking; "that *Dickens* dinner," as he explained to the more glib-tongued poet, still haunting his imagination with the memory of his break-down. Irving hardly filled the character of an ambassador, as defined by Sir Henry Wotton, *i. e.*, "one sent to lie abroad for the good of his country;" for, setting aside his natural incapacity for mendacity, the good of his country demanded nothing of the kind from him, whatever it may have done from our Minister to England, who had the Oregon affair upon his hands. The diplomatic life of Irving, which occupied four years, need not detain us long. From London he proceeded to Paris, where, as in duty bound, he called upon General Cass, our Minister to France, who drove out with him one evening to Neuilly, and presented him to Louis Philippe, his queen, and his sister, Madame Adelaide, all of whom took occasion to say some-

thing complimentary about his writings. He arrived at Madrid on July 25th, and installed himself in the apartments of his predecessor in the hotel of the Duke of San Lorenzo. Six days later he had an audience of the Regent, Espartero, Duke of Victoria. He was then driven to the royal palace, and presented to the little queen, a child of twelve, a puppet in the hands of intriguing statesmen, who went through the part assigned to her with childish dignity. Irving's letters to his relatives are largely made up of accounts of the politics of the country to which he was accredited, and which are mildly described by the word stormy. The Regent, Espartero, for example, was speedily overthrown, and the child queen was in the hands of Narvaez and his adherents, who issued *juntas*, *pronunciamentos*, and what not in the way of sounding public documents. He was a sagacious observer who could understand, and a rapid penman who could narrate, the events which Irving witnessed during his residence in Spain, and which it was his ambassadorial duty to communicate to his government. The amount of diplomatic business which now devolved upon him left him no time to perform a task which was near his heart, and upon which he had hoped to labor diligently. This was a Life of Washington, which had been proposed to him by Constable, the publisher, in 1825, while he was residing at Paris, and which he declined at that time from a modest diffi-

dence of his powers. "*I stand in too great awe of it,*" he wrote. Long brooded over, and fairly begun, at "Wolfert's Roost," he made but little progress with it at Madrid. His post finally grew so irksome to him that he resigned it in December, 1845, and impatiently awaited his successor, who appeared during the following summer, in the person of Gen. Romulus M. Saunders, of North Carolina. Irving turned his back on the Old World for the last time in London, early in September, 1846, and on the 19th of that month was at home once more in his beloved "Sunny Side."

The last years of Irving's life were passed in the enjoyment of the leisure and the honors that he had earned. His chief residence was at "Sunny Side," though he made occasional journeys, as in his early days, and his chief employment was the task upon which he had long set his heart—the Life of Washington—and the collection and revision of a complete edition of his works, many of which were by this time out of print. This edition, which was commenced in the summer of 1848, contained, in addition to the list of Irving's writings in the preceding pages, three later publications, "Oliver Goldsmith" (1849), "Mahomet and his Successors" (1850), and "Wolfert's Roost" (1855). The first was a subject which had engaged his attention twice before, and to which he was led to return by the appearance of Forster's "Life of Gold-

smith," which his publisher thought of reprinting. This charming book so freshened the memory of his favorite author, and stimulated his power of work, that in less than two months the sheets of his third biographical study were in the printer's hands. "Mahomet and his Successors," the last of the series of writings which he had projected during his first residence in Madrid, illustrative of the Moorish domination in Spain, was originally prepared for Murray's "Family Library" in 1831, but circumstances preventing its publication at the time, it was thrown aside for years. The neglected manuscript was found by Minister Irving among his papers during his last residence in Spain, where he beguiled the tediousness of illness by revising it, profiting, as he did, so by the light which later writers had shed upon the subject, particularly Dr. Gustav Weil, librarian of the University of Heidelberg, who is still an authority among the biographers of the great Arabian prophet. These additions to the body of his writings, excellent as they were in themselves, and important as they would have been in the life of a lesser author, were merely diversions from the labor which constantly occupied his mind and his pen as they slowly, but surely, proceeded with his "Life of Washington," the first volume of which was published shortly after "Wolfert's Roost," in 1855, the fifth and last volume in 1859, a few months before his death.

Irving died on the night of November 28th, 1859, and all that was mortal of him was buried on the 1st of December, at Tarrytown. It was a beautiful winter day, clear and sunny, radiant with the still lingering Indian summer, which shed a soft and melancholy light over the solemn scene. "It was one of his own days," said the mourners, as they rode from "Sunny Side" to Christ Church, where the funeral services were held, and thence to the cemetery, about a mile distant, on the side of a hill, with a view of the Hudson on one side, and on the other of the valley of Sleepy Hollow—classic ground, which the genius of Irving has made immortal.

- "His youth was innocent ; his riper age
 Marked with some act of goodness every day ;
 And watched by eyes that loved him, calm and sage,
 Faded his late declining years away.
 Meekly he gave his being up, and went
 To share the holy rest that waits a life well spent.
- "That life was happy ; every day he gave
 Thanks for the fair existence that was his ;
 For a sick fancy made him not his slave,
 To mock him with his phantom miseries.
 No chronic tortures racked his aged limb,
 For luxury and sloth had nourished none for him.
- "And I am glad that he has lived thus long,
 And glad that he has gone to his reward ;
 Nor can I deem that Nature did him wrong,
 Softly to disengage the vital cord.
 For when his hand grew palsied, and his eye
 Faint with the marks of age, it was his time to die."

So sang the greatest of our poets, Bryant, in his early manhood, in "The Old Man's Funeral,"

